






MECHANISMS OF CREATION AND FUNCTIONING OF CONTEXTUAL SYNONYMS IN NEWSPAPER TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

Newspaper discourse is characterized by high lexical variability aimed at ensuring semantic precision, stylistic diversity, and expressive evaluation of events. However, the mechanisms through which contextual synonyms are formed and function across different topical domains remain insufficiently systematized, particularly in quantitative and discourse-oriented terms. The study investigates the dominant mechanisms of creating contextual synonyms in English-language newspaper texts and examines their functional differentiation in medical, sports, and political discourse. The empirical basis of the research consists of 304 newspaper articles, including 197 medical, 66 sports, and 41 political texts, selected from British mass-market and quality newspapers published between 2021 and 2024. The study employs contextual analysis to establish synonymy within specific micro-contexts, lexico-stylistic analysis to classify the principal lexical and stylistic mechanisms involved in the creation of contextual synonymy, and statistical analysis to quantify their distribution, using semantic, functional, and referential criteria for identification. The results reveal clear domain-specific patterns in the distribution of mechanisms of contextual synonymy. In medical media texts, nominalization is the most frequent mechanism (18%), followed by metaphorisation (15%) and metaphonymisation (7%), while pronominalisation (10%) and numeralisation (8%) serve to generalize and structure statistical information. In sports discourse, nominalization is likewise dominant (20.8%), accompanied by metaphorisation (8.3%) and periphrastic expressions (8.3%), reflecting the need for precise yet expressive event representation. Political texts demonstrate a predominance of periphrastic nominations for political figures (18%), with negative or neutral political action nominations (15%), geographical terms (15%), and military-situation nominations (13%) forming a substantial share of contextual synonym usage. The findings indicate that contextual synonymy in newspaper discourse is organized through stable semantic-functional-referential overlap and realized through quantitatively differentiated lexical-stylistic mechanisms, with nominalization prevailing in medical and sports discourse and periphrastic nomination predominating in political discourse.

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary media communication, lexical choice functions not only as a means of transmitting information but also as a powerful instrument of evaluation, persuasion, and the framing of social reality. One of the key mechanisms enabling such flexibility is contextual synonymy, which allows speakers and writers to vary nomination depending on situational, pragmatic, and discourse-specific factors. Recent studies in media linguistics and discourse analysis emphasize that contextual lexical variation plays a decisive role in shaping public perception, particularly in politically sensitive, socially significant, and cognitively complex domains (Braçaj, 2020; Guo & Sandaran, 2023; Mialkovska et al., 2023; Syrett, 2024). Despite the growing scholarly interest in synonymy, linguistic variation, and media discourse, contextual synonymy in newspaper texts remains insufficiently systematized, especially with regard to its quantitative distribution and functional differentiation across discourse domains. Current research highlights the importance of context-dependent lexical choice in political discourse (Bosworth, 2023; Tsvirkun, 2020), medical communication (Nicholson et al., 2022; Vainahii, 2023), and

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sports journalism (Barseghyan, 2020; Poplavska et al., 2023). At the same time, studies focusing on synonymy often address either semantic proximity (Basile, 2022; Tilavova, 2023) or the computational identification of contextual synonyms (Li et al., 2023), while the mechanisms through which contextual synonyms are created, selected, and function in authentic newspaper discourse remain fragmented across disciplines. As a result, there is a lack of integrative models that explain how contextual synonymy operates simultaneously at the semantic, functional, and referential levels within media texts.

The scientific problem addressed in this study is the absence of a systematic, quantitatively grounded description of mechanisms of contextual synonymy in newspaper discourse, accounting for discourse-specific constraints and functional variation across medical, sports, and political texts. Although previous research confirms the relevance of contextual lexical variation for media influence, emotional colouring, and meaning construction (Caiani et al., 2021; Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021; Yu & Zheng, 2022), the distribution and interaction of concrete lexical-stylistic mechanisms –such as nominalization, metaphorisation, periphrasis, and pronominalisation–have not yet been analyzed within a unified empirical framework.

Methodologically, the study is based on contextual and lexico-stylistic analysis combined with quantitative methods, which enables the identification of contextual synonyms within specific micro-contexts and the measurement of their distribution across discourse domains. The study aims to identify and systematize the mechanisms underlying the creation of contextual synonyms in English-language newspaper texts and to determine their functional differentiation across medical, sports, and political discourse.

The article is structured as follows: the Materials and Methods section outlines the corpus, criteria, and analytical procedures applied; the Results section presents a quantitative and qualitative analysis of contextual synonymy mechanisms across discourse domains; the Discussion section situates the findings within current linguistic research; and the Conclusions summarise the main outcomes of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contextual synonymy is increasingly interpreted as a discourse-driven phenomenon that cannot be reduced to dictionary synonymy or isolated semantic similarity. Contemporary linguistic research emphasizes that synonymous relations emerge dynamically within communicative contexts and are shaped by pragmatic goals, evaluative orientation, and discourse-specific constraints. This understanding aligns with theoretical models that conceptualize synonymy as a functional, context-dependent category rather than a fixed lexical relation (Tilavova, 2023). This theoretical shift is especially relevant for media discourse, where lexical choice functions as a strategic instrument of framing, persuasion, and audience alignment.

Research on semantic groups in sports reporting demonstrates that lexical variation is closely tied to genre-specific conventions and communicative goals. The analysis of sports texts shows that actions, participants, and results are frequently re-nominated through metaphorical and nominal constructions that function as contextual synonyms, enhancing expressiveness while preserving referential clarity. Functional analyses of sports terminology in the mass media confirm that synonymous terms are systematically used to balance technical accuracy and expressive appeal (Poplavska et al., 2023). However, this approach remains limited to a single discourse domain and does not address cross-domain variation in mechanisms of contextual synonymy (Barseghyan, 2020).

Studies of political discourse highlight the role of linguistic devices in shaping evaluative meanings and ideological positioning. Lexical choices in political texts are shown to influence perception through indirect nomination and stylistic variation. This effect is further explained through genre-based analyses demonstrating how lexical variation functions as a deliberate means of influence and evaluative positioning in political texts (Tsvirkun, 2020). While such research confirms the persuasive potential of contextual synonymy, it does not provide a systematic classification of the mechanisms through which synonymous nominations are constructed and distributed across media texts (Braçaj, 2020).

Discourse-oriented analyses of political media coverage further demonstrate how contextual lexical variation contributes to the representation of political actors and events. Evaluative reformulation and periphrastic nomination are shown to function as tools of stance modulation and legitimacy construction. At the same time, these studies primarily focus on qualitative interpretation and do not provide quantitative evidence on the frequency or dominance of specific synonymy mechanisms (Bosworth, 2023).

Critical discourse analysis of news texts confirms that contextual synonymy actively shapes public opinion by framing events through alternative lexical choices. Such studies emphasize the social and ideological dimensions of synonymy but often treat lexical variation as a secondary phenomenon rather than as an object of systematic linguistic analysis (Guo & Sandaran, 2023).

Research on contemporary English-language media discourse adopts a broader interdisciplinary perspective, integrating linguistic, pragmatic, and social dimensions. These studies confirm that contextual synonymy contributes to expressive imagery and communicative effectiveness in media texts. However, the focus on digital and social aspects limits the depth of analysis of specific lexical-stylistic mechanisms within traditional newspaper discourse (Mialkovska et al., 2023).

Investigations into lexical innovation in journalism reveal that synonymy serves as a productive resource for introducing new meanings and maintaining stylistic variation. Lexical creativity is shown to support audience engagement, yet the contextual criteria that determine synonym selection remain under-theorized (Semen, 2021).

Semantic-stylistic analyses of literary prose underline the importance of context in forming synonymous constructions. These studies demonstrate that synonymy depends on situational meaning rather than inherent semantic equivalence. Nevertheless, the focus on literary texts limits the applicability of these findings to media discourse, which has a distinct pragmatic orientation (Semak, 2020).

Theoretical approaches to synonymy stress the dependence of synonymous relations on contextual parameters. Contextual dependence is shown to override traditional notions of semantic equivalence. However, such theoretical models do not account for discourse-specific functional variation, particularly in journalistic texts (Basile, 2022).

Research on pragmatic variation emphasizes that discourse goals and situational constraints shape lexical choices. This perspective supports the view that contextual synonymy is a function of pragmatic alignment rather than lexical similarity. However, the lack of empirical analysis across media domains restricts the explanatory scope of this approach (Syrett, 2024).

Medical communication studies demonstrate that lexical variation plays a crucial role in adapting specialized biomedical terminology for a general audience. Contextual synonyms are shown to mediate between technical precision and communicative accessibility, particularly in health-related reporting during periods of rapid technological and epidemiological change (Nicholson et al., 2022). Educational and methodological analyses of medical terminology further confirm that synonymy supports clarity and comprehension in professional communication. However, such studies primarily address pedagogical and instructional contexts and do not systematically differentiate between specific lexical mechanisms of contextual synonymy in media discourse (Vainahii, 2023).

Analyses of hate speech and socially sensitive discourse demonstrate that contextual synonymy can amplify aggression or mask discriminatory intent by offering alternative evaluative nominations. Lexical variation in such contexts functions as an indirect strategy of meaning modulation and ideological positioning. In particular, critical discourse analysis of advertising and media texts shows that contextual synonymy contributes to the construction of socially and culturally loaded representations, especially in identity-focused and evaluative discourse (Al Falaq & Puspita, 2021). Research on online hate speech during periods of social tension further confirms that alternative lexical choices reinforce emotional polarisation and ideological alignment; however, these studies prioritize socio-political impact over the linguistic mechanisms of synonym formation (Caiani et al., 2021). A systematic critique of racism and hate speech in digital media highlights how lexical variation normalizes discriminatory meanings through indirect nomination. However, the internal organization of contextual synonymy remains analytically underdeveloped (Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021). Similarly, large-scale reviews of hate speech research indicate that indirect lexical strategies are widely used to conceal aggression and reproduce social bias. At the same time, the specific lexical-stylistic mechanisms of contextual synonymy are not examined in a structured linguistic framework (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021).

Comparative discourse analyses of news reporting confirm that alternative lexical nominations influence the interpretation of the same event across media outlets. Contextual synonymy emerges as a key mechanism of framing and evaluative positioning. However, such studies focus on intertextual comparisons rather than on internal lexical organization (Yu & Zheng, 2022).

Computational approaches to lexical substitution conceptualize contextual synonymy as a task of selecting contextually appropriate lexical alternatives. Transformer-based models demonstrate that synonym selection can be formalized as an algorithmic problem, achieving high accuracy under controlled experimental conditions. In particular, research on context-aware lexical simplification shows that successful substitution depends on fine-grained contextual constraints rather than on surface-level semantic similarity alone, emphasizing the role of local contextual cues in synonym choice (Graichen, 2023). Earlier transformer-based approaches to lexical substitution further confirm that contextual information significantly improves the selection of candidate synonyms; however, these models treat synonymy primarily as a semantic matching problem and do not account for discourse-level evaluation or stylistic variation (Arefyev et al., 2020). Large-scale lexical substitution frameworks similarly prioritize semantic compatibility and contextual fit, while remaining largely insensitive to pragmatic goals and genre-specific stylistic intent (Lacerra et al., 2021). More recent paraphrasing-based substitution models reinforce this tendency by optimizing lexical choice for contextual plausibility rather than for communicative or evaluative function, thereby limiting their applicability to discourse-oriented analysis (Qiang et al., 2023).

Further computational research extends the treatment of contextual synonymy by integrating it into similarity-based tasks while emphasizing the roles of ambiguity and contextual constraints. Studies focusing on contextual synonym knowledge demonstrate that synonym selection is sensitive to semantic indeterminacy and local contextual cues. However, this sensitivity is primarily operationalised to improve model performance rather than to analyse discourse function (Li et al., 2023). Research grounding lexical substitution in entailment relations further refines semantic control over synonym choice, but conceptualizes synonymy as a logical-semantic relation, leaving pragmatic and genre-specific factors outside the analytical scope (Omarov & Kondrak, 2023). Approaches to self-supervised detection of contextual synonyms confirm that contextual compatibility can be modelled algorithmically across large datasets; however, such methods abstract away from communicative intent and do not address how synonymy operates within specific discourse genres.

Studies on lexical complexity approach synonym selection from a cognitive and processing-oriented perspective, demonstrating that word choice affects comprehension difficulty and interpretability. Research on perceived word complexity shows that lexical alternatives are evaluated differently depending on reader expectations and contextual framing, supporting the relevance of quantitative analysis for modelling lexical variation (Gooding et al., 2021). Similarly, investigations into lexical data augmentation confirm that controlled synonym substitution influences textual interpretation and sentiment processing. However, these models treat synonymy as a technical resource rather than as an evaluative or ideological mechanism in discourse (Xiang et al., 2021).

Research on digital discourse and language acquisition shows that contextual synonymy enhances communicative flexibility and learning outcomes. However, such studies focus on pedagogical contexts rather than journalistic discourse (Lazebna & Prykhodko, 2021). From a broader sociolinguistic perspective, linguistic variation across communities

demonstrates that contextual synonymy is shaped by interactional norms and communicative asymmetries, reinforcing its discourse-dependent nature (Del Tredici, 2020).

Taken together, existing research confirms the central role of contextual synonymy in meaning construction, evaluation, and audience influence across diverse discourse domains. At the same time, previous studies remain fragmented with respect to methodology, discourse focus, and analytical depth. In particular, there is a lack of quantitatively grounded, discourse-comparative descriptions of how specific lexical-stylistic mechanisms of contextual synonymy operate within newspaper texts.

The purpose of this study is to identify and systematize the mechanisms underlying the creation of contextual synonyms in English-language newspaper discourse and to determine their functional differentiation across medical, sports, and political domains. The following are the hypotheses of the study:

H₁: Contextual synonymy in newspaper discourse is realized through a limited set of recurrent lexical-stylistic mechanisms whose distribution varies systematically across discourse domains.

H₂: Nominalization predominates as a mechanism of contextual synonym creation in medical and sports newspaper texts, whereas periphrastic nomination is dominant in political discourse.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Procedure

The study of contextual synonyms was carried out in several stages, enabling us to systematise and analyse their use in English-language media texts. The first stage of the study involved collecting texts for analysis: 304 articles containing various examples of CS across multiple topics (politics, sports, culture, media). The research procedure comprised a comprehensive analysis of newspaper texts from British mass-market and quality newspapers for 2021-2024. A criteria system was developed at the second stage to identify contextual synonyms. Three main criteria were identified: semantic, functional, and referential. A detailed analysis of each text in which contextual synonyms were identified was carried out at the third stage. The mechanisms of their creation, their functional role in sentences, and the contexts in which they are used are analyzed.

Methods

Contextual analysis is the primary method for identifying CSs, which are connections between words with standard semantic and functional features within a particular context. As a result, a classification of CSs was developed, including definitions of their semantic, functional, and textual features.

Lexical and stylistic analysis. To evaluate the use of various stylistic devices (metaphorisation, nominalisation, pronominalisation, etc.), a linguistic and stylistic approach was applied, enabling us to analyse how CSs perform the functions of imagery, emotional colouring, and evaluation in media discourse.

Statistical analysis. A quantitative analysis was conducted to examine the frequency of using different methods of creating CS, from which the percentages for each method in newspaper texts were determined.

Sampling

The study sample included 304 articles: 197 medical, 66 sports, and 41 political articles. The number of articles was chosen to ensure the study's representativeness and to cover a wide range of contexts and genres in the media space. The sample sources included such media as "THE GUARDIAN," "THE TELEGRAPH," "THE DAILY MAIL," "THE MIRROR," and "THE SUN."

Medical micro-contexts (197 articles) were selected for their high level of specialized terminology and the need to use CSs to facilitate perception of complex concepts. The sports micro-contexts (66 articles) were chosen for their emotionally charged nature, which actively uses metaphors and periphrases to create imaginative descriptions of events. Political microcontexts (41 articles) contain complex synonymous constructions that define the political situation, emotionally coloured assessments, political manipulations, and strategies to influence the audience.

Tools

The following tools and programs were used to analyze the texts:

Textalyser is an online text analysis tool that allows you to estimate the frequency of use of various lexical items and identify synonymous variants in texts.

AntConc is a software for corpus analysis of texts that allows us to identify CSs and their paradigmatic relations within the articles studied. Microsoft Excel was used to visualize the results, particularly to build graphs and tables of the CSs distribution.

These tools enabled a comprehensive analysis of CS across different genres of newspaper texts and the determination of their stylistic and functional characteristics.

RESULTS

During the study, the key criteria for defining CSs were identified based on aspects of their functioning, standard semantic features that appear only in specific contexts, and functional similarities between words and phrases. Essential criteria for identifying CS are the commonality of the contextual referent and textual orientation, which considers syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations between units in the speech process (Table 1).

Table 1. Criteria for identifying contextual synonyms (CSs)

Criteria for the selection of CS	Explanation
Semantic commonality	Standard semantic features shared by words or phrases in a particular context.
Functional commonality	Similarity in the functional use of words and phrases in specific contexts.
Commonality of contextual referent	Common denotations or referents in a particular context.
Textual orientation	The importance of contextual analysis for the study of synonymous relations in speech.
Lexical flexibility and situational applicability	Contextual synonyms that change depending on the situation and functional use within the context.

CS is a complex phenomenon that cannot be reduced to simply substituting words out of context. It depends on the linguistic situation and the interpretation of meanings through the speaker's specific functional and stylistic attitudes. The semantic commonality of CSs is not recorded in dictionaries and is revealed only through contextual analysis, including cognitive and pragmatic evaluation. This also confirms the importance of considering intertextual and interdiscursive relations for a complete understanding of the functioning of contextual synonyms in speech.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the primary methods of creating contextually synonymous nominalizations in sports media texts. The variety of these methods helps to create imagery and evaluation, improving the effectiveness of sports communication. According to the data, nominalization is the most common method, accounting for 20.8% of the total articles.

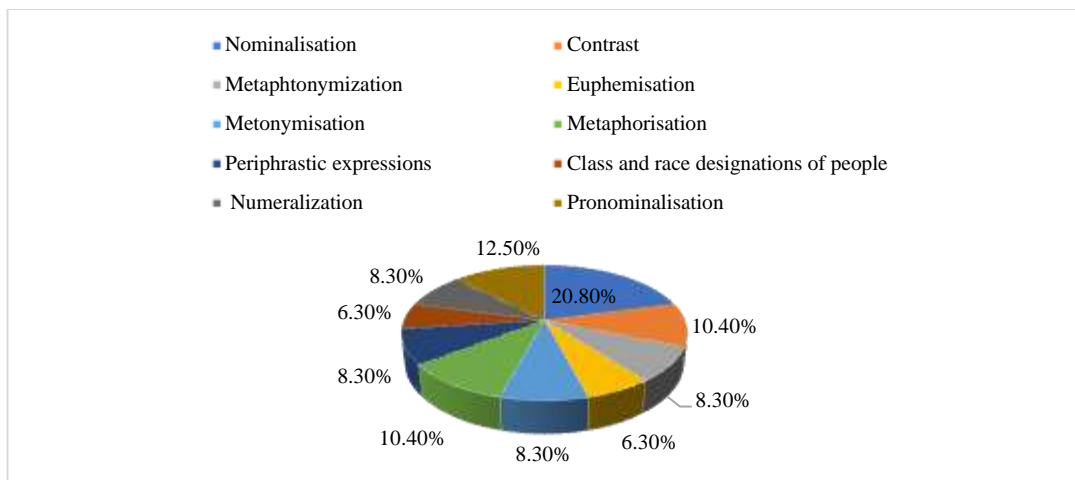


Figure 1. Distribution of ways of creating contextually synonymous nominalizations in sports texts

Sports micro-contexts (66 articles) are marked by a high level of emotional colouring and imagery, which is also reflected in the use of *metaphorisation*, *periphrastic expressions*, and *contrast* to enhance the expressiveness and dynamism of the texts. Nominalization is the most frequently used technique, as sports texts often describe specific events, awards, and records that require precise designation.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of periphrastic expression categories in political newspaper texts.

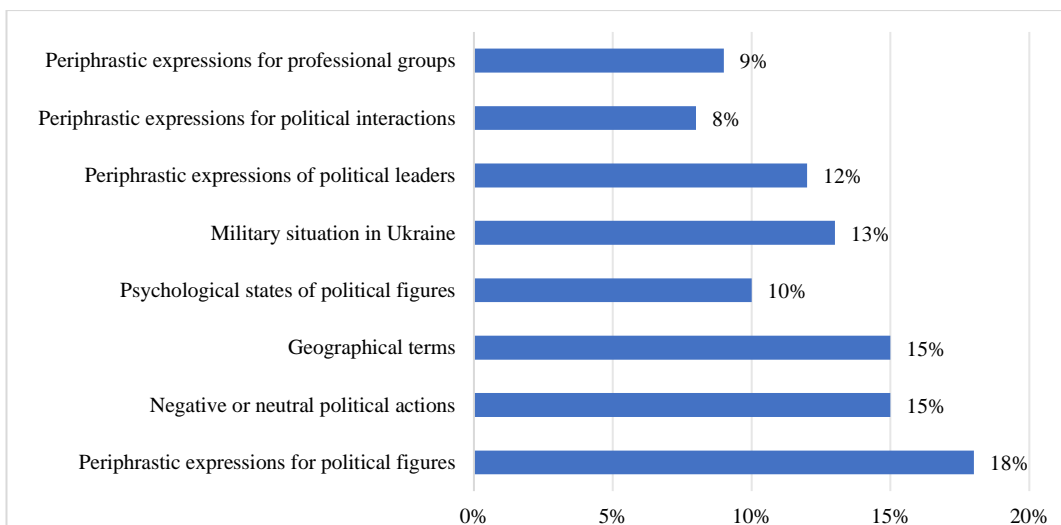


Figure 2. Distribution of categories of periphrastic expressions in political texts

Periphrastic expressions for political figures account for the largest share (18%). For example, in articles, Boris Johnson can be described as “a pumped-up narcissist” or “a waste of space,” which negatively assesses his political style. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in turn, is often described as “*the hero leader*” or “*a comedian*”, reflecting his unusual path to a political career. Volodymyr Putin is described as “*the increasingly paranoid leader*” and “the Russian leader,” emphasizing his domineering and authoritarian tendencies.

Negative or neutral political actions account for the second-largest share (15%). This includes descriptions of actions that carry a negative connotation. For example, “*Putin's aggression*” or “*Putin's war in Ukraine*” demonstrates the destructive aspects of his policies. Such expressions emphasize physical aggression and the political context, creating a strong emotional backdrop for how the situation is perceived.

Another important element is the use of *geographical terms*, such as “*Moscow is a mafia state apparatus*,” which contributes to the image of Russia as a centre of authoritarianism and political manipulation. This expression is highly emotional and reflects the global political situation in modern geopolitics.

Other categories, such as the *psychological states of political figures* (10%) and the *military situation in Ukraine* (13%), also play an essential role in creating contextual synonyms. For example, terms referring to Putin's psychological state, such as “*an aggressor*”, or, in the context of the war, “*Ukraine crisis*” and “*Putin's invasion of Ukraine*”, contribute to the creation of clear ideas about the situation and enhance the emotional colouring of political discourse. These categories of synonyms emphasize the importance of using emotionally rich, stylistically diverse expressions in political speech, thereby enabling a more precise and expressive portrayal of current political events.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of ways of creating contextually synonymous expressions in medical media texts based on newspaper articles from 2021 to 2024.

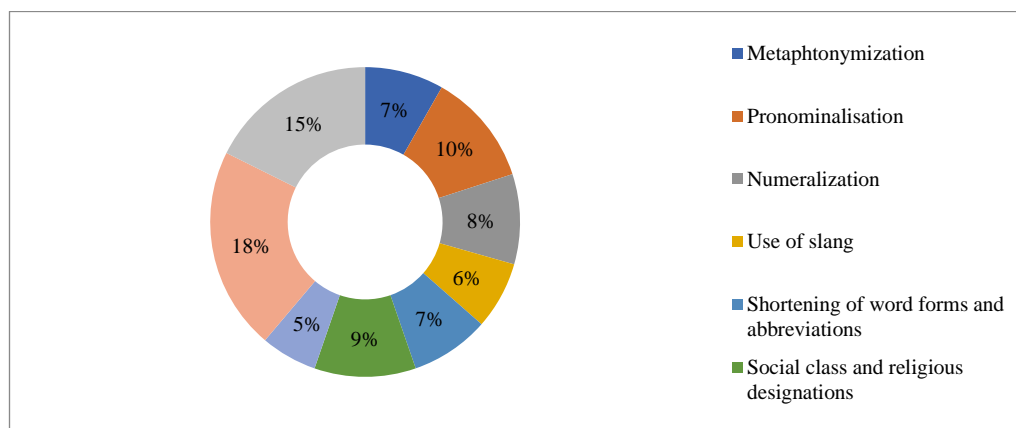


Figure 3. Distribution of ways of creating contextually synonymous expressions in medical media texts

The distribution of ways of creating contextually synonymous expressions in medical media texts shows various lexical means. Nominalization (18%) accounts for the largest share, ensuring accuracy and clarity in the description of medical concepts and referents. Example: ‘Peter 2.0’ (a character representing a cyborg with artificial intelligence). In this context, nominalization creates an image of Peter as a new version of a human being who becomes a cyborg.

Metaphorisation (15%) and metaphonymization (7%) are also important, as they are actively used to create expressive images and enhance the emotional colouring of texts. Example: “DOXORUBICIN IS A RED DEVIL” is a metaphor for drugs used in chemotherapy that emphasize their toxicity and ability to cause side effects.

Pronominalisation (10%) and numeralization (8%) summarise and identify numerical data in medical articles. Example: “64 per cent of white people had been or would soon be vaccinated, compared to 55 per cent of blacks who responded to a Kaiser Health News survey” - replacing the nominal name with a numeral to clarify the statistic.

Other categories, such as the use of slang (6%), abbreviations and acronyms (7%), social class and religious designations (9%) and presuppositions (5%), also contribute significantly to the creation of contextual synonyms that facilitate the effective perception and understanding of information in media discourse. Example: “Goblin mode” is a new term for refusing to return to “normal life” after a pandemic. It is modern slang that has gained popularity.

Examples are “SARS-CoV-2” (the coronavirus that causes COVID-19) and “ME/CFS” (chronic fatigue syndrome). Abbreviations are often used to simplify complex medical terms.

Thus, the various stylistic devices used in medical texts reflect the importance of accuracy, emotionality and accessibility of the information provided to a broad audience.

DISCUSSIONS

Our study and Poplavskaja's et al. (2023) work have common aspects regarding CSs in sports terminology. Poplavskaja notes that terms in sports texts, particularly in football, tennis and golf, go through several stages of assimilation, from borrowed Anglicisms to the subsequent use of local terms created through various lexico-semantic processes such as calquing and semantic borrowing. This aligns with our observation that contextual synonymy, particularly nominalization, is essential to developing imagery and dynamism in sports texts.

Our research shows that nominalization (20.8%) is the most common way of creating CSs in sports media texts, reflecting the importance of accurately designating events, awards and records, similar to Poplavska's study. However, their study focuses more on differences in the influence of English terms and their adaptation in Czech sports terminology, while our research concentrates on different types of CSs and their functions in sports communication. Poplavska et al. (2023) also emphasizes the importance of lexical borrowing mechanisms for developing sports terminology, which aligns with our study.

Barseghyan (2020) emphasizes the classification of words by semantic meaning, noting that synonyms in sports texts are essential for enriching information and creating specific emotional connotations when describing sports events. He also draws attention to the stylistic diversity achieved through synonyms, emphasizing their importance in eliminating monotony and adding new shades to the expressiveness of texts. This aligns with our finding that sports media texts actively employ various methods to create CSs, among which nominalization is the most common (20.8%).

Barseghyan (2020) also notes the use of synonyms in specific cases to enhance meaning, where the role of synonymous pairs in creating vivid, emotionally charged images is essential. This aligns with our observation of the importance of metaphorisation and periphrastic expressions (8.3% and 8.3%, respectively) as crucial tools for enhancing the text's expressiveness, a critical aspect of sports communication.

At the same time, despite the similarity of approaches, the studies differ in their emphasis on different types of synonymy. Barseghyan (2020) focuses on semantic groups of synonyms, noting their dependence on context and stylistic features. In contrast, our study focuses on the mechanisms of creating contextual synonyms, with nominalization as the primary mechanism, accounting for 20.8% of the total number of articles.

Vainahii (2023) and Nicholson et al. (2022) also emphasize the importance of accuracy and context in medical texts, where contextual synonyms help to identify medical terms and adapt them to different settings. However, our results indicate a greater role of metaphorisation (15%) and metaphonymization (7%) in creating expressive images that enhance the emotional colouring of medical texts, in particular through examples such as "DOXORUBICIN IS A RED DEVIL", which reflects the toxicity of the drug.

Pronominalisation (10%) and neutralisation (8%) mentioned in our study also parallel the work of other authors, as these methods contribute to the generalisation and precise definition of statistical data, which are essential for the analysis of medical research and statistics. For example, replacing nominal terms with numerals in vaccination contexts helps make information more accessible and understandable to a broad audience, as confirmed by research on medical texts.

Comparing our study with Braçaj (2020), Tsvirkun (2020), and Bosworth (2023), we can see both commonalities and differences in approaches to analyzing contextual synonyms in political texts.

Braçaj (2020) examines various linguistic tools in political discourse, including the role of contextual synonyms that enhance the expressiveness of a political message. The author notes that to impact the audience effectively, politicians often use word substitution to enhance emotional impact, a finding similar to ours, which also emphasizes the role of emotional colouring in the context of political texts. In our study, the largest share of periphrastic expressions for political figures (18%) reflects a negative or neutral assessment of politicians, similar to Braçaj's idea of using various linguistic means to manipulate political discourse.

Tsvirkun's (2020) study focuses on lexical means of influence in political text, particularly in the speech genre. This approach also aligns with our research, which describes how political figures are represented through periphrastic expressions, enabling the creation of images and the reinforcement of political assessments through stylistic means. For example, Tsvirkun's work examines the impact of contextual synonyms on the perception of political figures and events. This is similar to our study, which notes the emotional colouring of political texts, contributing to a more accurate reflection of political realities.

Bosworth (2023) also studies the use of terms denoting the psychological state of political figures, as in our study. This article examines the use of lexical means to express evaluations and social roles in political discourse, which has the common goal of manipulating emotional perception.

The study focuses on media texts published between 2021 and 2024, limiting its relevance to earlier or future periods. The analysis focuses only on newspaper and magazine articles, which may differ from other types of media content, such as television or radio reports, which also use CS. The study of CSs is limited to three main areas (medicine, sports, politics), which do not cover all possible uses of synonyms in media discourse.

For a more in-depth study, it is recommended to expand the sample to include other media texts, such as TV news, radio programmes, and Internet resources, to examine contextual synonyms across different communication channels. It is recommended that contextual synonyms in other genres, such as scientific articles or advertising texts, be further investigated to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their functioning across different communication settings. Since CSs have cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural aspects, it would be helpful to engage interdisciplinary approaches to further study this phenomenon, including psychological analysis, sociolinguistics, and cognitive linguistics.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify and systematize the mechanisms underlying the creation of contextual synonyms in English-language newspaper texts and to determine their functional differentiation across medical, sports, and political discourse.

Overall, the findings confirm that contextual synonymy in newspaper discourse is not random lexical variation but a structured mechanism of meaning construction that combines semantic overlap, referential continuity, and discourse-

driven evaluation. Based on 304 English-language newspaper articles (2021–2024), the analysis demonstrates stable domain-specific patterns in the creation and use of contextual synonyms.

In medical discourse, contextual synonymy is primarily realised through nominalisation (18%), which supports semantic precision and clear reference management in complex information environments. At the same time, metaphorisation (15%) and metaphonymization (7%) contribute to interpretability and emotional salience, while pronominalisation and numeralisation facilitate the structuring and compression of statistical information. In sports discourse, nominalization is also dominant (20.8%), reflecting the need for compact, accurate naming of events, outcomes, and achievements, while metaphorisation and periphrastic expressions intensify imagery and narrative dynamism. In political discourse, contextual synonymy is characterized by the predominance of periphrastic nominations for political figures (18%), alongside frequent nominations of actions, locations, and military-related situations, which serve as tools for evaluative framing and stance modulation.

The unique contribution of the paper lies in offering an integrated, quantitatively grounded, cross-domain description of mechanisms of contextual synonymy in newspaper discourse. Unlike studies that treat synonymy mainly as semantic proximity or as a computational substitution task, this research links mechanism type (e.g., nominalisation, periphrasis, metaphorisation) to domain-specific communicative functions, demonstrating that contextual synonymy is organised through measurable regularities across discourse domains.

The results support an understanding of contextual synonymy as a semantic–functional–referential phenomenon, in which synonymy emerges in discourse through the alignment of referent, function, and evaluative purpose rather than through dictionary equivalence. The findings also strengthen discourse-based models of lexical variation by showing that different domains privilege different mechanisms in systematic ways.

For journalists and editors, the results provide a practical rationale for lexical choice as part of responsible framing: in medical reporting, prioritizing nominalization and controlled metaphorisation can improve clarity while maintaining accessibility; in sports journalism, nominalization combined with moderated metaphor/periphrasis can sustain expressiveness without sacrificing referential precision; in political reporting, careful management of periphrastic nominations is recommended to reduce unintended bias and ensure transparent evaluative positioning. For education and training, the findings can be incorporated into journalism and philology curricula as a structured set of strategies for teaching how lexical variation shapes audience perception.

The study is limited to English-language newspaper discourse and to a corpus drawn from British mass-market and quality newspapers within the period 2021–2024. In addition, the analysis focuses on three discourse domains (medical, sports, political), which do not capture the full range of newspaper topics or multimodal media formats. Finally, while the study provides robust distributional evidence, it does not experimentally test audience perceptions of specific mechanisms of contextual synonymy.

Future studies may (1) expand the corpus to other English-speaking media ecosystems and additional languages to test cross-cultural stability of the patterns; (2) include other domains (e.g., economics, crime reporting, climate discourse) to refine the domain-typology of mechanisms; (3) extend analysis to digital-native formats (social media news, headlines, push notifications) and multimodal contexts; and (4) incorporate reader-response or experimental designs to measure how particular mechanisms of contextual synonymy influence comprehension, trust, and evaluative judgement.

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